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Citizen Participation in Local Governance and Sustainability of Programmes

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Abstract- The purpose of this paper is to examine the need for citizen participation in local governance and sustainability of programmes in order to strengthen democracy and repositioning the local governments to meet the challenges of development. Any system of government is primarily constituted to provide services required by the citizens and this could be achieved effectively through participatory mechanisms. Hence, citizen participation in local government affairs will bring about development programmes in direct contact with the people and encourage them to become initiative and innovative. In this paper attempt was made to highlight the concept of participation, the structure of local government, participatory programmes for development and review of related experience for local citizen participation. On the basis of the finding, some recommendation such as well established democratic structure of local government to enhance citizenship participation, local officials should be engage in capacity building and innovative spirit to improve the delivery of services and also government should design a people orientated development programmes at all levels.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The primary rationale of democratic local government is that it brings government closer to the citizens. Mechanisms for participation at the local level are essential element to ensure that local governance promotes participation to citizens.

Development activity that has multi – dimension process will be successfully executed or implemented if a participatory measure is involved. Likewise the various services of local government councils can be delivered successfully through direct or indirect participative mechanisms. It is widely accepted that citizen participation in local development affairs will give sense of belonging, equality, and sustainability of development.

Local government councils initiates and provides the needed development considering the facts that local communities have a tremendous amount of knowledge and information about their environments that can form the baseline of sound and sustainable development.

People have a right to partake in actions and plans which affect their lives as nonparticipation approaches to development have failed to significantly

alter the quality of life and resources of the poor people world-wide (World Bank 1999). This development was first noted in farming system resources and led researchers to start involving farmers in their research and development programme through farmer's participation in resources. This later advanced to farmer designed and managed on farm research. Other branches of research and development soon took up the approach. By the end of the 1980s, participation of the target group in the planning process from research through project identification, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation was considered important.

a) *Defining Participation*

Various scholars have attempted to define it ranging from "token involvement of people," to 'autonomous decision making by popular bodies at local level' and other viewed as "to take part"- this is very simplistic and implies that everyone is participating at some level in every actions.

b) *Types of Participation*

- Physical participation – being present, using ones skills and efforts,
- Mental participation –conceptualizing the active, decision making, organization and management,
- Emotional participation – assuming responsibility, power authority
- Manipulative participative- participation is pretence with people's representative on official boards but who are un-elected and have no power,
- Participation for material incentives—people participate by contributing resources, e.g. labour, in return for material incentives,
- Participation by consultation – people participate by being consulted or by answering questions. External agents define problems and information gathering processes and so control analysis.
- Self mobilization participation – people participate by taking initiatives, they develop contacts with external bodies for resources and technical advice that they need, but retain control over how the resources are used.
- Interactive participation – people participate in joint analysis, development of action plans and the formation or strengthening of local institutions
- Participation can be top-down or bottom-up, uniform or diverse, simple or complex, static or

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dynamic, controllable or uncontrollable, predictable or unpredictable.

c) *The structure of Local Government*

Local government structures in Nigeria provides a framework for delivery of a range of services ranging from housing, health, education, etc, that are summarized into the exclusive functions and the concurrent functions. To achieve these constitutional responsibilities different participatory measures will be put in place so that all groups of citizens should be involved in the governance processes. The concurrent functions are those that the Local Government performs in collaboration with State and Federal Government. Also the State or Federal Government can perform such functions on behalf of Local Governments until Local Government are able to perform such functions. In other words, the State, Federal Governments, civil society organizations and community based organizations can provides participatory and partnership roles in attaining good governance to the citizens.

Basically, the structure of the presidential system of Local Government at the grass root level consists of the legislature and the executive, the judiciary being absent.

i) *The executive arm*

This consists of the chairman, vice chairman, supervisors and secretary of council. The chairman of the Local Government council is the chief executive and accounting officer of the council. The secretary of council and the supervisory councilors are appointed by the chairman of council.

ii) *The legislative arm*

The Legislative arm of the Local Government council is composed of the leader of the council and other councilors. To time by an edict or law of the state in which it is situated.

There may be other theoretical Structurization of the Local Government. These can be categorized into the administrative structure where the Chairman, Secretary, Supervisory councilors and Heads of Department are involved.

The Financial Structure where the treasurer and Auditor General of the Local Government are involved assisted by committees such as:

- i) The Financial and general purpose Committee
- ii) Police and Community relations Committee
- iii) Education Committee
- iv) Works and Housing Committee
- v) Health and Environmental services Committee
- vi) Agriculture, Rural and Social Services Committee
- vii) Financial and Economic planning Committee;

The Personnel Structure, headed by the head of Personnel.

The Personnel Department is responsible for the Personnel of all Local Government which acts in

liaison with the Local Government Services Commission, which is charged with responsibilities of staff discipline, welfare and training in the Local Government.

Due to the concomitant democratic resonance of modern Local Government system, the political structure of the local government tends to overshadow other structures and thus remains pivotally significant.

Traditionally citizen participation in local government has been through the electoral system, with councilors representing each electoral area. The elected members receive their mandate to represent citizens through the democratic process of local elections held every two / four year's term. Despite the democratic process involved in the system, local communities have felt increasingly alienated from local government, partly because of frustration with the limited range of activities which fall within circle of the local authority and perceived inefficiency, partly because of the godfathers associated with elected members who are perceived as representing the views of only some sections of the community, the perceived corruption of local government, and partly because of the perceived failure of local authorities to be pro-active in responding to new needs and demands. At the same time local councilors have felt frustrated by the range and scope of activity, and the funding opportunities made available to local development groups, which seemed in many cases to be taking over the functions that should belong to democratically elected representatives.

Good Governance- means providing an inclusive and popular participation in government that respect the rule of law, transparency, accountability, prevention of corruption, effective and efficient public management systems and processes. Good Governance provides a responsive and centre oriented governance to the people that ensure legitimate governance and democratic institutions.

d) *sAn Over View of Participatory Programme Development Process*

The two main concepts in Participatory Programme Development (PPD) are "participation" and "community". Participation can take forms within a development programme, and some types of participation are more "participatory" than others.

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals were developed from the eight chapters of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. There are eight goals under which the UN provides participatory role {interagency consultation} and cooperation to all member nations on challenges facing humanity as variously categorized like combat HIV/AIDS, MALARIA and other diseases, promote gender equality and women empowerment, develop a global partnership for development that includes a commitment to good

governance development, poverty and hunger reduction, primary education, environmental sustainability, etc.

The various participatory programmes were used to access the basic needs of various groups of individual/cooperatives and communities. The goal of Participatory Programme Development communities to develop feasible, desirable and sustainable programme Participatory Programme Development (PPD) uses approach known as Participatory Learning and Action (PLA).

Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) is a process that enables community members to: (a) analyze their needs; (b) identify possible solutions to meet those needs; and (c) develop, implement, and evaluate a plan of action. [Participatory Learning and Action (PLA)]

Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) is based on the assumption that community members are the best “experts” about their own health and social situations. The role of Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) facilitators are to help the community members tap their own knowledge and resources and use them effectively.

The Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) are brought back to the development agencies to be analyzed by “experts”.

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) evolved out of Rapid Rural appraisal (RRA) in the 1980s mainly through experimentation by small Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). It focused more on the appreciation of local people’s capabilities to plan and implement their own process and techniques as described. The process are heavily based on Rapid Rural Appraisal {RRA} and Participatory Programme Development {PPD}.

PRA emerged in the late 1970s in the agriculture and environment sectors as a reaction against “rural development tourism”{RDT} where urban based development officials were taken on specially arranged tours of rural area and given a very biased view of successful development projects. Participatory rural appraisal {PRA} was used to gather information more quickly and with a higher level of community involvement. After the information is collected it is taken out of the community as opposed to rapid rural appraisal which stopped at an appreciation of local people knowledge.

The term Participatory Learning and Action [PLA] which has been used in recent years to designate the whole family of participatory approaches above, emphasized the ACTION phase of the process, that is, the phase when the community implements its solution. PLA can be conducted in all types of communities (e.g., rural, pre-urban). Although originally conceived for use in agriculture, environment and natural resources sectors including health, gender, education and

violence prevention within the health sector PLA has been used in project dealing with woman’s reproductive health, HIV/AIDS prevention, nutrition, child survival, health care financing and water sanitation.

Foundation of Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) Participatory Learning and Action has the following foundations:

i. *Behaviors and attitudes*

Many PLA practitioners believe that these elements are the kinds of behaviors and attitudes, which are necessary for the successful facilitation of PLA, includes respect for local knowledge and capabilities (reversal of learning), rapid and progressive learning, “handing over the sticks” or exchanging of baton, flexibility and informality, offsetting bases, seeking diversity and self-critical awareness.

ii. *Methods Used To Gather and Analyze Information During The Planning Process*

Following are some examples of this method, mapping and diagramming, semi-structured interviews, sorting and ranking, transect walks and observation, time-line charts, schedules and seasonal calendars and matrices.

Many of these methods are visual and they can therefore be used by those who are illiterate or semi-literate, which encourages the participation of all members of the community.

Review Of Related Experience For Local Citizen Participation The primary rationale of democratic local governance is that it brings government closer to the citizens. Mechanisms for participation and accountability at the local level are essential elements to ensure that local governance promotes participation and is also accountable to citizens.

Significant progress has been made in Nigeria in holding regular local elections, in many cases through multi-party systems. However, many of the municipal executives or councils and municipal presidents - have been elected through indirect means. Most countries in Africa (such as Ghana, Niger and Uganda) and Asia (India, engage citizens in the local decision-making process through consultations. Gram Sabha in India and Barangay in the Philippines are examples of such locally-based informal administrative units.

As in the case of democratic governance at the national level, local participation is both a means to an end and an end in itself. As a means, effective mechanisms for local participation facilitate service delivery and access, mobilization of community resources and implementation of local development projects. As an end, local participation promotes local democracy and participatory decision making}.

Rural activities in the evolving economic judging by the Nigeria experience is still largely characterized by small holder farm units, low output, low income, low savings and inadequate inflow investment capital.

Though efforts were made by successive government to address this abysmal situation, yet little has been achieved against high level of poverty in the rural areas of Nigeria (Fayinka 2004). Two seasoned experts on rural development have identified the frequency of policy variation due to government instability as learning impediments to effective rural economic development. Other specific hindrances were also identified to be technical deficiencies, lack of natural resources, inadequate government policies, limited availability of basic physical infrastructures (roads, ports, telecommunication, electricity, energy, water supply, sanitation etc), ineffective management system, non-availability agriculture reasons and socio-political agricultural reasons (Oyelude 2002; and Fayinka 2004).

Donor agencies such as the Department For International Development (DFID) and International Labor Organization (ILO) had been actively supporting participatory development through their activities worldwide. Even the World Bank, home of neo-liberalism in economics, is now beginning to acknowledge the role of participation in development. The work of the International Institute of Environment and Development (IIED) in the United Kingdom, South America and India has greatly advanced the course of participatory approaches. India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the Philippines (Asian Region) perhaps more than any other region, have incorporated this approach into local level development planning. The work of the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (SKRSP) MYRADA and ACTION AID in India testify to this fact.

In Nigeria a few institution such as International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Farming Systems Research Network, Institute Of Agricultural Research and Non- Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the Rural Development Arm of the Catholic Church are now actively incorporating participation and participatory techniques in their work.

However, sadly the pre-1980 approaches to development still represent the dominant view of Nigeria today. But time has come for a change in the positive direction to use participatory approach to development which is services to beneficiaries, the Ijero/Oderele farming community was involved in identifying this project. The community members were involved in identifying interventions and monitoring indicators. Selected community members were involved in sensitization, training and monitoring exercises.

The international Fund for Agricultural Development [IFAD] promoted Katsina and Sokoto Agricultural and Community projects. These projects were Community – Based Rural Development Projects sponsored by {IFAD} and focused on working with community groups to achieve sustainable development objectives.

The two projects served as the forerunners of the wider IFAD promoted community – Based Agricultural and Rural Development Programme {CBARDP} which Borno was one of the northern states that were selected for the programme.

II. RECOMMENDATION

- A well established democratic structure of local government to enhance citizen participation,
- Local Government should be innovative/initiative to improve the delivery of local services for example, town and villages renewal scheme,
- Local Government should decentralize programme to bring services in direct contact with the citizens and staff closer to citizens,
- Local government should encourage an increasing level of participation by civil society in decision making structures at local level,
- Local government should understand that citizen participation is not just a change in structure or the introduction of new structures. Real citizen participation is an integrated way of working,
- Capacity building at all levels is required to sustain participation, etc

III. CONCLUSION

Any system of government is primarily constituted to serve the citizens at all levels of the society. The objective of the governance is to develop the citizen by providing necessary infrastructures to improve the life of the citizenry. The rationale behind such policies is to bring government closer to the people. Finally to achieve a developmental goals and objectives, local government should rise up to put in place all necessary thresholds for development, especially participatory mechanisms.

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